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Cover

Threatened language balance? Fountain of Justice in bilingual Biel/Bienne.
(Photo: Peter Studer)

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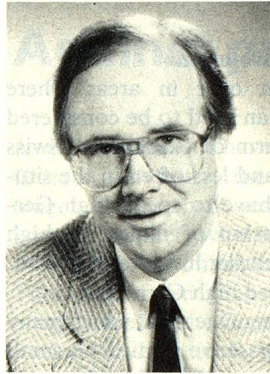
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Editorial

Lack of social contact?



Switzerland is a Willensnation – a country held together by the will of its own people. A nation originating from a large number of small communities in a process which has lasted for centuries. A classic feature of its cultural diversity is its four language families which live peaceably together.

Peaceably or indifferently?

It is no secret that for many German-speaking Swiss the difficulties in western Switzerland can already begin with the ordering of a beer. On the other hand, the Romans, the French speakers of Switzerland, fare no better in German Switzerland.

The ugly word «unsocialibility», the denial of social contact, is going the rounds. The recent wave of dialect which has surged ever wider in Alemannic Switzerland also does not make it any easier for the population of the French-speaking area to communicate with the German Swiss.

The experts knit their brows. And in the Swiss Parliament, initiatives are pending which express the concern about the declining knowledge of the national languages and which would prevail upon the government to do something about it. How goes it with the question and situation of communication in Switzerland, this nation of consensus? Read the «Forum» articles on page 4, and on.

Apropos of «Forum», this is the name of the new heading and columns of our magazine which you will find in every issue from now on. We want at all times to be able to give our readers more extensive information about a particular problem, in the sense of a thematic focal point, which, however, will cover several pages and include various contributions. So that you may be better in the picture about what makes feelings run high in your homeland.

Jürg Müller, lic. phil., Editor